

The Christian's Crucible #2

James 1:1-18

Introduction: It would be safe to say that there is not a single person in this room that is free from some type of trial right now. Testing is a part of the Christian experience. The book of James deals with testing, trials, and persecutions. No one is exempt from the heartaches of life.

Quote: “You are either going into a trial, in one, or just coming out of one.” Dr Rogers.

Yet the scriptures help us to not only deal with trials but to flourish in them. You may be experiencing a great deal of pain right now or a level of stress that just knocks you down. I hope to give you clear scriptural truths that will help you cope.

There are many reasons why you may be in testing and trials. We will look at as many as possible. Sometimes we suffer because we are sinful and God has to correct us. At other times God will test us to reveal our character flaws for spiritual growth. Many times you are actually walking closely with Christ and you can't figure out why God would put you in the position you are in. The reasons why we suffer are clearly defined in scripture. Dealing with that suffering is much more difficult.

In his book *“Broken Things,”* M. R. DeHaan uses Jeremiah the prophet, and his words from Jeremiah 4:3, to describe the process of spiritual renewal. The first aspect of renewal is being broken.

“For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, break up your fallow ground, and sow not among the thorns.”

Israel was facing dark days due to spiritually fallow ground. They had put their trust in false securities and became apathetic. Uncultivated hearts will grow thistles and thorns.

In our context James was dealing with persecution from the early days after Pentecost all the way through the first century. Jews were scattered throughout the nations in the diaspora. As far back as 700 B.C. the Jews were persecuted with Babylonian captivity and the Greek and Roman wars. We know that God used persecution to scatter His people and with the dispersion the gospel spread as well. As the Apostle Paul traveled he encountered synagogues in the cities to which he went. God used persecution to spread the gospel before Paul ever entered his destinations on his missionary journeys.

Just think what the Jews must have thought when God allowed the Romans to destroy their Temple in A.D. 70. God was making a statement about His Son and the sharing of the gospel. There would be no need for the sacrificial system for those in Christ. Jerusalem was no longer the hub. God had given clear commands about taking the gospel to the nations. That didn't happen, so God made it happen with persecution.

Recipients: Jewish Christians scattered throughout the nations (Outside Palestine). Jews meeting in synagogues with elders almost like it was before Christ came but with a new knowledge. These were poor Jewish Christians that experienced great persecution and had many trials. James talks a lot about the rich in this book.

Background: Written to those who were in discouraging circumstances that needed encouragement to face the opposition and trials so they could live a victorious Christian life. This is where the book relates to us.

Occasion: James does not tell us how he knew about these Christians. He is a pastor and the pastor of the church in Jerusalem. James felt that he had advice and expertise that could help them. He felt that practical advice could help them in their

situation. James wanted to **challenge** them and **encourage** them.

I. The Promise of Trials: Verse 2

- **James says that “whenever” you have trials not “if.”**
Greek: Hotan- an unexpected time. Whenever it happens.

1 Peter 4:12-19 (ESV)

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial **when** it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory^[b] and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”^[c] ¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

Quote: “*God cannot use you greatly until He hurts you deeply.*”

Illustration: When God wants to drill a man, and thrill a man, and skill a man, when God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part, when He yearns with all His heart to create so great and bold a man, that all the world shall be amazed, watch His methods, watch His ways! How He ruthlessly perfects whom He royally elects! How He hammers him and hurts him, and with mighty blows converts him, into trial shapes of clay, which only God understands; while his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands! How He bends but never breaks when his good

He undertakes; How He uses whom He chooses, And which every purpose fuses him; By every act induces him to try His splendor out-God knows what He's about.

Phil 1:29-30

²⁹ For it has been graciously granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ having the same kind of struggle that you saw I was in, and that you now hear I am still experiencing.

- **James also says to consider it Joy:** *chara*- joy!

I will tell you this is quite difficult. How can we Have joy in these tough situations in life. *Hegeomai*- to count or suppose or rule over. *Peirasmos*- temptations.

Solicitation, discipline, adversity, a putting to proof or to try. Sometimes refers to inner temptations and outward trials (Rogers). When God is the agent it refers contextually to testing. Later in this passage, and in other places, James uses *dokime*, another word used for *tempts* is when man is the agent. *Types or divers*, *spoikilos*, various in character, of an uncertain kind or many.

Heb 12:11

11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

KJV

Kinds of Trials:

- **Spiritual** – This is John 15 lived out. God simply prunes the man. He is either breaking up fallow ground or cleaning sin.

John 15:1-2

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

- **Mental or emotional-** Mental stress and emotional instability is hard to live with. Frustrations and stress is a terrible way to endure life. As we learn to cope we grow spiritually and emotionally. There are many factors that cause stress and some just can't be eliminated. No one is exempt from the pressures of life. We have to have support and a growing spiritual life to endure.

Illustration: A widow has posted a touching tribute on social media this week, just days after her husband, a Southern California pastor, reportedly took his own life -- a tragedy that has shaken his church community. Andrew Stoecklein, 30, lead pastor of the Inland Hills Church in Chino, about 40 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, had recently returned to his church duties after time away to deal with depression and anxiety, the Christian Post reported.

~Can I say that we need to be encouraging to others. You never know what others are dealing with. People in this world live with dark depression and pain all around them. Trapped up emotions and hurt cause people to just quit. If you go around just unloading all your rudeness on others you need to get right.

Acts 14:22

21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, **22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.** "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

Why did Paul go back through these cities? **To encourage them.**

Financial - possibly one of the most difficult stresses to endure. Sometimes its self-inflicted due to over spending and at other times its due to loss of job or illness. Either way it's tough. It can destroy your life and marriage.

Physical - You may get sick or your may have to care for one who is sick. Many Saints have dealt with this. My heart goes out to those who have to deal with these issues.

Because these things exist we need a strong relationship with the family of God. Many times members do not realize the importance of the body until they need the body. I hate to say it, but many people abuse the body. They treat it like an old ball glove. It's tucked away and only brought out for a brief game of catch.

Quote: CHS... *"Thou shalt never find a bundle of affliction which has not bound up in the middle of it sufficient grace."*

"God does not give us what we can handle; He helps us handle what He gives us."

Choice Men

"I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."

~ Isaiah 48:10 ~

This has long been the motto fixed before our eye upon the wall of our bedroom, and in many ways it has also been written on our heart. It is no mean thing to be chosen of God. God's choice makes chosen men choice men. Better to be the elect of God than the elect of a whole nation. So eminent is this privilege, that whatever drawback may be joined to it we very joyfully accept it, even as the

Jew ate the bitter herbs for the sake of the Paschal Lamb. We choose the furnace since God chooses us in it.

We are chosen as an afflicted people and not as a prosperous people, chosen not in the palace but in the furnace. In the furnace beauty is marred, fashion is destroyed, strength is melted, glory is consumed, and yet here eternal love reveals its secrets and declares its choice. So has it been in our case.

In times of severest trial God has made to us our calling and election plain, and we have made it sure: then have we chosen the Lord to be our God, and He has shown that we are assuredly His chosen. Therefore, if today the furnace be heated seven times hotter, we will not dread it, for the glorious Son of God will walk with us amid the glowing coals.

II. The Process of Trials: Verses 3-8

Verse 3: “*You Know*” (PAPTC) You are knowing. If you’re saved you know that God is going to work perseverance into your life. He is testing your faith (*dokimion*) to bring perseverance into your life.

Point: I can just about endure anything if I know God is behind it.

~If I can get a reason for it and the trial is in measure to what God wants to accomplish I’m good.

~But you don’t always get that confirmation.

~ It’s hard when you are not In control and you don’t get to pick how severe the trial gets.

~ If we can see a reason for it then we usually do okay.

~ But what is God testing? **Your faith.** And that means that you have to trust in the storm. You may not be told why or how long.

~ Listen... James tells us that even if we don't know or see all our answers that God still has a plan and process.

Testing of our faith brings Perseverance.

Greek: Works or worketh... root *ergon* (NIV, develops)(PMI). It accomplishes or performs.

Hypomone... patience endurance, continuance. The middle verb tells me that we have to work with God when He tests our faith for us to receive the perseverance.

This is a working endurance.

~ "Patience or perseverance" *Hypomone*- This word means more than just quietly waiting for something. It appears 32xs in the NT. It means to *abide under*. It refers to systematically going after the goal. This is a virtue that can only be produced through experience. Its root comes from *meno*, which means to abide or remain. When you remain in the game you don't cease to exist do you?

Patience and endurance are closely related. Neither means inactivity. **You cannot endure something that you are not doing.**

Illustration: God grows us into more difficult tasks. When you learn one lesson you get a more difficult task. Testing your faith brings perseverance.

i.e. Spanish helped me do well in Greek

Verse 4: Process #2 Patience when it's complete will allow God to perfect you in all other areas.

Greek: When patience is finished you will be perfect or *teleios*. Perfect or of full age, a man. You will have mental and moral character. You will be *holokleros* (NIV, mature and complete), entire or whole. You will be complete in every part. You will not be lacking or wanting anything...

whit (The smallest particle imaginable). ***We may actually say that patient endurance is the foundation of all other Christian virtues.***

-To be complete in all its parts. Used of sacrificial animals without defect. Perfect and holy and appropriate for sacrifice. To be of good health. Rogers says it refers to the entirety of Christian Virtues.

~ **Not lacking anything**” *leipomenoi*- not falling behind. To be left wanting or undeveloped.

Point: God will test your faith so that you learn perseverance and become complete, mature, and whole so as to not get left behind spiritually. Many people just get left behind spiritually and they are even the cause of their children getting left behind. Shame on you. When the church grows, or the ministry grows, and you are not here, you fall behind.

Here’s is what happens... you end up quitting, which is exactly what Satan wants. Or you try to dump a ton of salt on your family all at one time. You end up as a big spiritual crybaby. You sap the life out of anybody who will listen but never change. Remember Romans 14:1 and Romans 15:1? Paul knew the babies would be frustrating.

Matthew 5:13

“You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”

Verse 5: Process # 3- When you are in the middle of trials you may ask for wisdom. God does not “*upbraid*.” In other

words, God does not revile or get angry with you when you ask for help or wisdom.

Quote: A Greek Maxim says, *“the knowledge of ignorance is the beginning of the knowledge or wisdom.”*

The Process of Wisdom: Verse 5

- 1. Faith-** Barclay says you must know that God gives generously and that you must ask in faith. Some give with the expectation of a return gift. Not God.
- 2. Endurance-** If you endure your faith will mature. You will endure general trials, trials in service (the closer you get to people the more warts they get), In chastisement, undeserved affliction, in bearing fruit, and in perfecting character.

2 Timothy 2:8-13

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

¹¹ Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,
we will also live with him;
¹² if we endure,
we will also reign with him.
If we disown him,
he will also disown us;
¹³ if we are faithless,
he remains faithful,
for he cannot disown himself.

Colossians 1:11

¹¹ being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...

1 John 5:4-5

⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

NIV

2. Maturity- Wisdom comes from maturity. Spiritually and naturally.

The Process of Deceit: Verse 16

1. Doubt- Doubt kills the process of spiritual growth and trust. To stagger or waver. Like a drunk man. *diakrino*- He is between judgments.

2. Impatience- When you get ahead of God in trials, or lag behind, or even quit. You take yourself out of the game.

3. Double-minded- Immaturity, tossed: This is *dipsuchos*- two souls. This is a man that has two minds or is inside out. *"He is a walking civil war"* (Barclay).

The Picture: This doubting man is deceived and is described as a wave blown and tossed. He is driven (PPPTC) and is unstable in all his ways. He is tossed by the wind. His life stays upside down. The foam on the tops of the waves gets blown off by the wind. There are people that never seem to get their lives on track. They are two-souled, and driven by outside sources constantly. There is no consistency or stability in their lives.

The Unstable Man:

- ~ They try to replace God with other spiritual or secular activity. Many times the most active people are the emptiest.
- ~ They move from one spiritual project to another and never finish anything. They will even change secular jobs at times to try and get peace.
- ~ They can move from obedience to disobedience in a second.
- ~ They always justify their sin and actions by blaming others; they will even blame God.
- ~ They never know what to do; they are always “seeking” God’s will but never make a decision.
- ~ When chastised, they blame others, and God, but never yield to the hand of God and learn endurance.
- ~ They are active but empty; they are busy but beaten.
- ~ They don’t understand basic Christian principles or disciplines.

The Stable Man:

- ~ He will suffer for doing what’s right. We are never more like Christ than when we suffer for doing good or being falsely accused.
- ~ Leans on and trusts God in all situations.

Isa 41:10-11

¹⁰ So do not fear, for I am with you;
 do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
 I will strengthen you and help you;
 I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

11 “All who rage against you
will surely be ashamed and disgraced;
those who oppose you
will be as nothing and perish.

~ Sees the purpose in the pain and trial. He looks long term into the trial and sees it's best for growth.

~ He is so attached to God that when God takes something away from him that is precious he is not destroyed by the separation. Material blessings do not compare to his love for God. Holiness is more important than material blessings.

~ He allows God to prepare him for future success with current affliction, e.g. S. Burgess, Spanish.

III. The Person of Trials: Verses 9-11

Quote: J B Mayor – In his book *The Epistle of Saint James*, “As the despised poor learns self-respect so the proud rich man learns self-abasement.”

Quote: Barclay says that Christianity brings every man just what he needs.

The Poor Man: He learns that he is useful in the church, in the world, and to God. Many times slaves were the ministers of the congregations. The church must see men differently. Every saved man has a place in the world. He is useful in the kingdom when he serves God. All men are redeemable and valued by God.

The Rich Man: He learns that to trust in riches, is to trust in the temporary. He will learn humility and abasement in the kingdom. He will learn that he and his riches are but a mist. Riches burn up just like the grass of the field in the heat of the day. There are no

rich men and poor men in heaven. There are only redeemed men in heaven. Your poverty may in fact be the reason you are going to heaven now. Poor people need God.

IV. The Purpose of Trials: Verse 12

In verse 3 we learned that testing brings about perseverance, which brings maturity and then completeness. In 1 Peter 1:6-9, we learn a valuable lesson about the purpose of trials. It is congruent with verse 12 of James 1. In verse 12 we are told of a ***crown of life.***

1 Peter 1:6-9 (NIV)

⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

- In verse 12 we are told that we receive ***“the crown of Life.”***

*** The Greek word here is ***stephanos.***

The 5 Types of Crowns for Believers:

1. The Crown of Righteousness- 2 Timothy 4:8
2. The Incorruptible Crown- 1 Corinthians 9:4
3. The Crown of Life- James 1:12; Revelation 2:10
4. The Crown of Glory- 1 Peter 5:2-4
5. The Crown of Rejoicing- 1 Thessalonians 2:19

The Greeks used crowns to show many things; obviously it showed that the contest was over. To recognize those who finished and those who competed by the rules. The crown was to bring **dignity** and **honor** to those who completed the task. Crowns were made of flowers to represent **joy**. Some were made of laurel leaves to show victory. The crown was a sign of **victory, royalty, and dignity**. For the Christian, the crown resents heaven and the right to eternal life. The crown shows that we endured and that we persevered to the end. The completion proves who we are.

V. The Progression of Trials/Sin: Verses 13-15

- The context tells us clearly here that God does not tempt. Period! God is unaffected by evil. So let us say here and now that God is not under control of, or influenced by evil, in any way. God is sovereign and the sole Deity in the universe. No matter if you believe in the permissive will of God, or a predestined will of God, you cannot say that God is evil, or affected by it. How evil got here is another sermon. Our question here is this... so how does a man get into trouble and sin?
 1. He is tempted by his own evil desire, i.e. lust. Which is not sin at this stage.
 2. He gets dragged off (Passive Participle)
 3. He gets enticed (Passive Participle)
 4. Desire has a conception. **Sullambano- to seize or clasp.** To take or receive. To catch or to conceive. Here in this text- *to excite to sin in an irregular desire*. Used here, metaphorically.
 5. In other words, to birth a sin.

6. The sin will progress and become fully grown... **apoteleo**. The sin will become complete or fully developed (passive)(notice the play on words in verse 4; it brings forth death).
7. The sin actually is birthed and grows. It “brings forth” or “gives” birth to death.

Greek: Illustration: The Greek word here for “gives” is the word **apokuma**, which means to bend or curve. It’s root is translated as “wave.” It is the billow or swell of the wave, hence “curve.” The toppling of the wave is the picture. We have all looked out into the ocean and have seen the building of a wave that finally reaches the shore with a crash. The wave billows or topples. Sin does this as well. It builds upon conception and grows until it reaches death. Sin will eventually culminate into death. Sin will be just like the wave out in the ocean. Most times it’s not even detectable. There are forces that pull on the wave that you can’t see, just like the moon effects the ocean, but can’t be seen. Sin is just like that wave; it will be seen soon enough, and it will also crash into the shore.

VI. The Perfection of Trials: Verses 16-18

- The admonition is to not get deceived- Know that God gives good gifts even if they come in the form of trials. Our word here for “deceived” is **planao**. The meaning is to **err, to go astray, to wander or go out of the way**. **James tells us not to allow ourselves to be deceived by taking or conceiving a sin that is disguised as a good gift.**

God’s gifts are:

1. **Good-** even if it looks and feels bad. Like putting new skin on a burn. Like putting antiseptic on a wound.

2. **Perfect-** always designed for our good.
3. **From Above-** God is the originator and giver of all things good.
4. **Consistent-** James uses two astrological terms to teach us about God. The first is **parallage**, which means changeableness or variations. Second, the changing of shadows or the turning of shadows, **trope**. James compares the movement of the stars and planets to the constancy of God who created the heavenly lights. God's universe changes as the planets and heavenly lights move, but He is immutable. The lights change, but the creator does not. **If He is unchanging, so are His gifts.**
5. **Eternal-** What does verse 18 say that God has given us?
 - You were chosen.
 - Given truth.
 - First fruits.
 - Priority in creation.

2 Cor 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal
NIV.

Closing: An artist made a beautiful vase and it was very valuable. It was his finest work to date. As he displayed it to all his friends they marveled at its beauty. Then right in front of their eyes he took a hammer to it and crushed it into small pieces. His friends were shocked and distressed at the seemingly unnecessary

act of ridiculousness. The party was over and all the disturbed guest departed. He then began to sweep all the small pieces up and took them to his work station. There he began another work more beautiful than the first. He took each broken piece and put it back together with gold. He inlaid gold into each crack and crevasse of the broken vessel. When it was finished the vase was more beautiful than ever before.

This is a great picture of the sovereign hand of God that loves us enough to shatter us occasionally so as to rebuild us into a more beautiful and useful vessel. How broken you are is not the most important thing; whose hands you are in when you are broken, and how you are put back together, is what makes the usefulness of the vessel.